

Personnel *pRide*

Published by The Rhode Island Office

of Personnel Administration
SEPTEMBER 1986

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR ISSUES POLICY AND RULE CHANGES

Several important changes to Personnel Rules, Policy, and the Merit System Law were recently published by State Personnel Administrator Bradford E. Southworth. Included are time off for the purpose of taking examinations and going for job interviews; a new retirement option; additional personal time off; changes in rates paid retirees under the 75-day rule; and medical coverage for eligible employees retiring between August 30, 1986 and December 31, 1986.

Time Off for Exams and Job Interviews

In the interest of fostering upward mobility among state employees, the Personnel Administrator has amended personnel policy to grant time off from work to state employees for the purpose of taking state civil service examinations, or going on state job interviews.

Employees may now be granted time off for examination purposes if they meet the examination "admission requirements specified by the Office of Personnel Administration and would meet the qualifications for appointment to that position."

(Continued on page 4)

GOVERNOR ORDERS REORGANIZATION OF DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

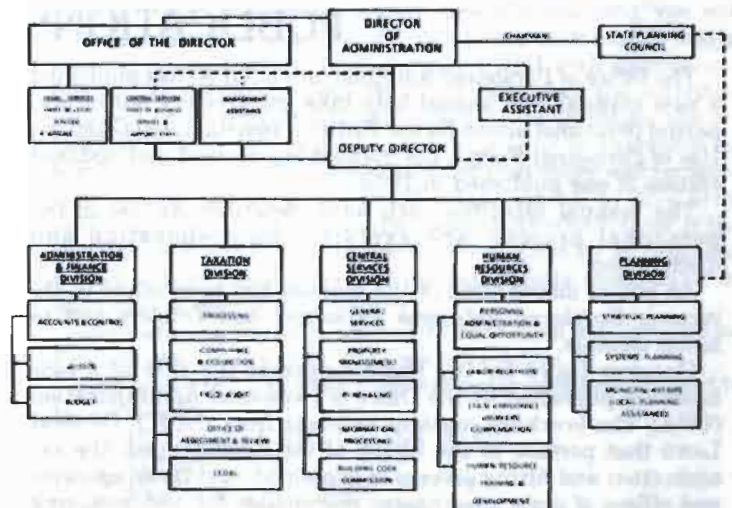
By Executive Order, Governor Edward D. DiPrete has ordered the reorganization of the Department of Administration.

The order comes on the heels of a recently completed management study by the firm of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co., and follows the general recommendations hammered out by the consultants and state officials.

The Department of Administration's new organizational structure appears below.

According to Governor DiPrete, additional sections or other organization sub-units within divisions may be created where needed at the discretion of the Director of Administration. Transfers of personnel and physical property within the Department of Administration may be made where necessary to affect the reorganization, the Governor said.

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION



INSIDE pRide ...

LEGISLATIVE ROUND UP

A digest of legislation of interest to state workers passed by the 1986 Session of the General Assembly
Page 2

EXTENDED HEALTH CARE BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO STATE EMPLOYEES, SPOUSES AND DEPENDENTS

The latest information on the new federal law (COBRA) that allows for extension of health coverage
Page 3

BE A FRIEND!

RIARC's Friendship Program needs you!
Page 5

YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER... THE RHODE ISLAND ZONE

Not a Hitchcock thriller but a locally produced film that has won national acclaim
Page 5



CELEBRATES 40th!

The Rhode Island State Employees Credit Union (SECU) is celebrating its 40th Anniversary . . . and we are all invited to "Come Celebrate With Us."

SECU is planning a special week-long anniversary celebration honoring the credit union's forty years of service.

Festivities begin with free coffee and Danish for all members on Monday, September 22, 1986, at any branch location.

Then, register for their Grand Prize Give-aways . . . A Merry Weekend for two at Sheraton Tara Hotels.

The drawing will take place on Friday, September 26, 1986, at their Gala Wine & Cheese Party!

Details for these events and other 40th Anniversary information is available at all branch locations.

These festivities are SECU's way of thanking its valued members for their years of service and loyalty.

"We hope everyone will help us celebrate this event!"

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION (OPA) PUBLICATIONS

The Office of Personnel Administration (OPA) has published a new manual that should help take the mystery out of preparing personnel action forms. Entitled Instructional Guide on Use of Personnel Forms, the manual is a revised and updated edition of one published in 1978.

The manual identifies each form, describes its use in the personnel process, and explains the preparation and distribution.

An initial distribution of the manual has been made to Directors, Employee Relations Personnel and Officers and to union officials.

Opening Doors for the Handicapped is the title of a new brochure published by the Office of Personnel Administration (OPA). The brochure contains excerpts from the R.I. General Laws that pertain to the hiring of the handicapped; the examination and hiring process is explained; and those agencies and offices of state government responsible for administering the hiring process are identified.

Single copies of the brochure are available free of charge from the Office of Personnel Administration (OPA). Requests for bulk quantities of the brochure should be addressed in writing to the Office of Personnel Administration Business Office, 289 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908.



LEGISLATIVE ROUND UP

Legislation of interest to state employees passed by the 1986 Legislature

Much legislation affecting state employees was passed by the 1986 session of the legislature. Listed below are some of these important measures. Please note that the number cited opposite the description is not a bill number but the chapter number in the R.I. Public Laws of 1986.

Chapter	Description
43	Allows employees to examine their personnel files under certain conditions.
58	Reduces from 25 years to 20 years the time required for incumbents to obtain tenure in state service.
60	Repeals the section of the General Laws which formerly granted employment preferences only to male war veterans. As a result of this change, these employment preferences are now available to all such veterans regardless of gender.
92	Prohibits sex discrimination in state institutions of higher learning.
98	Provides for reasonable accommodations for the handicaps of employees and prospective employees. It also provides for these reasonable accommodations for members and prospective members of labor organizations.
101	State employees with prior service time with a Rhode Island city or town may have that time credited for the purpose of computing vacation accrual.
224	Increases the maximum burial expense allowance for a worker dying as a result of injury on the job to \$5000.
375	Requires promotional examinations for state employees in the classified, unclassified and non-classified service.
383	Includes jury duty in the overtime provision section of the Merit System law relating to leave.
395	Extends ordinary death benefits of state employees from \$400 to \$800 for each year of state service with a limit of \$16,000.
418	Defines preferred reemployment list in the state employees' Merit System, and restates the present law that the preferred reemployment list takes precedence over all other lists for the filling of vacancies of comparable or less comparable positions, until the list is exhausted.
442	Provides for the regulation of smoking in the workplace to protect the public health and welfare by requiring an employer to adopt a policy that will accommodate the preferences of non-smokers and smokers.
482	Provides an alternative method of computing the cost-of-living adjustment for retired teachers and retired state workers.
542	Amends the retirement system law to allow for an additional option called the Social Security Supplemental Option that permits the payment of a larger retirement benefit up to age 62 and a reduced benefit thereafter. The benefits are actuarially determined.

For additional information on this and other legislation, contact your Employee Relations Officer or the Secretary of State Library, Legislative Reference Section, 277-2473.



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR ...

Executive Orders

No.	Date	Subject
86-12	5-19-86	Establishes an annual ceiling of \$200 million on the issue of a variety of state and local government bonds defined as "Restricted Bonds."
86-13	5-19-86	Amends Executive Order 85-23 establishing an architectural/engineering selection committee, procedures, and guiding policy.
86-14	7-3-86	Designates the Rhode Island Occupational Information Coordinating Committee to be responsible for oversight and management of the state's comprehensive labor market and occupational supply and demand system.
86-15	7-16-86	Reorganizes the Department of Administration.
86-16	8-1-86	Amends Executive Order No. 85-26 establishing a Governor's Committee on Ethics in Government.

For more information or copies of Executive Orders, contact the Office of the Governor's Legal Counsel, Room 320, State House — 277-2080.

THE TRAINING SCOOP ...

The following fall and winter courses are being offered by the **Training and Development Section**, Division of Human Resources:

American Red Cross Standard First Aid and CPR

Starting Dates: Sept. 3 & 4; Nov. 5 & 6; Feb. 4 & 5

Pre-Retirement Planning. Starting Date: Sept. 5

Functions of State Government Within the Merit System

Law.

Starting Dates: Sept. 22 & 23.

Leadership and Supervision Skills.

Starting Dates: Jan. 12 & 13.

For additional information — 277-2178.

The **Community Development Training Unit (CDT)** is also offering courses in Assertiveness, Introduction to Word Processing, Introduction to Microcomputers, Lotus 1-2-3, Rapid Reading, Stress Management, Graphic Design for Non-profits, Grant Writing, Pre-Retirement Education, Persuasion, and other communications skills courses.

For more information — 277-2877

WATCH YOUR BULLETIN BOARD FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS ON THESE AND OTHER TRAINING COURSES.

pRIde

Personnel pRIde is published by the Office of Personnel Administration, Division of Human Resources, Department of Administration, 289 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908

Director of Administration
Frederick Lippitt

Associate Director of Administration/Human Resources:
Earl J. Croft, Jr.

Personnel Administrator:
Bradford E. Southworth

Editor:
Donald J. Boisvert

EXTENDED HEALTH CARE BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO STATE EMPLOYEES, SPOUSES AND DEPENDENTS.

A new federal law now requires that certain employers offer employees and their dependents the opportunity for a temporary extension of health coverage (called "continuation coverage") at group rates in instances where coverage under the health care plan would terminate.

The law called COBRA for Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 was signed in April, 1986 and is effective July 1, 1986. The law applies to the State of Rhode Island as an employer.

As a State employee covered by a group health plan, you have a right to choose this continuation coverage if you lose your group health coverage because of a reduction in your hours of employment resulting in a loss of benefits, or the termination of employment for any reason including retirement, (except for gross misconduct on your part).

As the spouse of a State employee covered by a group health plan, you have the right to choose continuation coverage for yourself if you lose group health coverage for any of the following four reasons:

- death of your spouse
- termination of your spouse's employment (for any reason other than gross misconduct), or reduction in your spouse's hours of work resulting in a loss of benefits
- divorce or legal separation from your spouse; or
- your spouse becomes eligible for Medicare.

A dependent child of an employee covered by a group health insurance plan has the right to continuation of coverage if the group health plan coverage is lost for any of the following five reasons:

- death of a parent
- termination of a parent's employment (for reasons other than gross misconduct) or reduction in a parent's hours of employment resulting in a loss of benefits
- parent's divorce or legal separation
- a parent becomes eligible for Medicare
- a dependent ceases to be a "dependent child" under the group health plan.

The employee or a family member is responsible for informing the plan administrator of a divorce, legal separation or a child losing dependent status under the group health plan.

The State as employer has the responsibility of informing the plan administrator of the employee's death, termination, or reduction in hours, or Medicare eligibility.

When the plan administrator is notified that one of these qualifying events has occurred, the administrator will in turn notify you that you have the right to choose continuation coverage.

According to the law, you have at least 60 days from the date you would lose coverage, because of one of the events described above, to inform the plan administrator that you want continuation coverage.

If you do not choose continuation coverage, your group health plan coverage will end at the time of your qualifying event or in accordance with the group health plan's contract, or state law(s).

If you choose continuation coverage, the State as your employer is required to give you coverage which, as of the time coverage is being provided, is identical to the coverage provided under the plan to similarly situated employees or family members.

The new law requires that you be afforded the opportunity to maintain continuation coverage for 3 years unless you lose group health plan coverage because of termination of employment or reduction in hours of employment, resulting in lost benefits. In these cases, the required continuation coverage period is 18 months. (Continued on page 4)

Extended Care (Continued)

However, your continuation coverage may be terminated for any of the following reasons:

- the State no longer provides group health coverage to any of its employees
- the premium for your continuation coverage is not paid on time
- you become an employee covered under another group health plan
- you become eligible for Medicare
- you were divorced from a covered employee and subsequently remarry and are covered under your new spouse's group health plan.

Under the law, you may be required to pay all or part of the premium for your continuation coverage.

At the end of the 18 months or 3 year continuation coverage period, you must be allowed to enroll in an individual conversion health plan provided by the group health plan at the prevailing market rate.

This is a broad-brush overview of the COBRA law and its requirements. More specific details on its implementation will be published when federal rules and regulations have been established. For more information, write to the Office of Personnel Administration, 289 Promenade Street, Providence, RI, 02908 or call 277-2160 and ask for the COBRA Hotline.

Policy and Rule Changes

(Continued from page 1)

The Personnel Administrator has cautioned appointing authorities that they may deny such time off only "in those cases in which the normal operation of the agency would be significantly disrupted."

In this case and where there is a make-up examination, employees "shall be granted such time off for the make-up examination."

Likewise, time off from work for the purpose of state job interviews are now permissible as a nonchargeable absence covered under administrative leave.

If normal agency operations would be significantly disrupted by granting an employee time off for a job interview, "every effort should be made by the superior to reschedule the interview for the employee."

State employees in turn are reminded of their responsibility to inform their respective supervisors as soon as possible of the time of the interview, location, and time they are expected to return to work.

Social Security Supplemental Option —

This change to the retirement system was enacted by the 1986 Legislature.

It provides for an additional retirement option called the Social Security Supplemental Option. Employees retiring before age 62 may select this option which permits the payment of a larger state retirement benefit until age 62, and a reduced state pension thereafter. The benefits are actuarially determined.

Additional Time Off

One additional personal day has been granted to all state employees effective July 1, 1986. This personal day is granted on a fiscal year basis, and brings to four (4) the number of personal days available to employees.

For the initial enactment of this benefit, those employees covered by bargaining units whose contract is based on a calendar year, will have their time pro-rated, thus entitling them to one-half day for the first year, and one day thereafter.

75-Day Rule Rate Change

The General Laws provide for the appointment of retired state employees for a period of up to 75 working days or 150 half-days with half-day pay, in any one calendar year without forfeiture of or reduction in any retirement benefits and allowances.

In the past, the daily rates of such post retirement employment were based on the total rate of pay the employee was receiving at the time of retirement.

The new policy is as follows:

"Eligible employees shall not be appointed to a paygrade higher than that held when they retired and shall not be paid at a rate higher than the first step of the grade. Longevity, education incentive or other supplements shall not be included or added to the first step rate of pay."

Medical Coverage Benefits for Retirees —

The state is offering lifetime, paid basic medical coverage benefits to eligible employees who elect to retire between August 30, 1986 and December 31, 1986. The retiree must pay the difference in rates for family coverage.

Policy on Communicable Disease

A policy statement has been issued establishing guidelines for appointing authorities to follow when situations arise involving employees suffering from communicable disease.

The guidelines require appointing authorities to make a thorough assessment of the risks involved, while maintaining confidentiality, and showing compassion for the employee.

Appointing authorities are further urged to seek assistance from the Rhode Island Department of Health prior to taking any official action involving employees suffering from communicable disease.

* * *

For a report on legislation affecting state workers, see Legislative Round Up in this issue of pRIde.

BITS 'N' PIECES

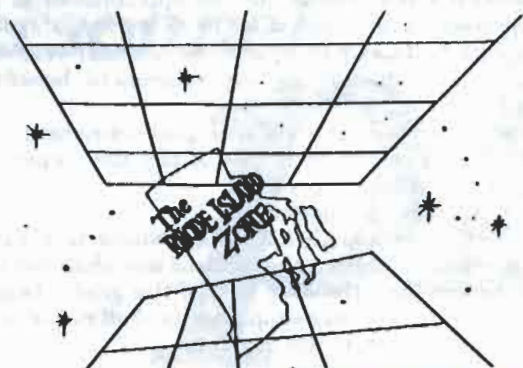
The Office of Personnel Administration's new computerized personnel certification system is now on line. This new system expedites the recruitment and placement process by eliminating many manual clerical tasks.

In order for the new automated certification process to work efficiently and economically, it is imperative that lists of eligibles be kept purged of those no longer interested in other employment. If your name is on one or more promotional/employment lists, and you are no longer interested in other employment, PLEASE notify the Office of Personnel Administration (OPA) in writing to remove your name from the list(s). As State employees, we are all interested in promoting efficiencies and effecting economies. Ultimately, they benefit all of us.

The long-awaited 911 emergency telephone system is now operational. Known officially as the Uniform Emergency Telephone System Authority (ETSA), the unit is headed by Mr. Ernest E. Ricci, the Executive Director. The new emergency group is located at One Communications Place, Providence, RI 02903.

Personnel Administrator Bradford E. Southworth was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE) at the organization's annual meeting in Seattle, Washington, in July. Mr. Southworth will also serve on the Executive Committee. Mr. Eugene Rooney, Deputy Personnel Administrator of our neighbor state of Massachusetts was elected President.

YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER . . .



THE RHODE ISLAND ZONE

If the title and graphics seem vaguely familiar, well they might. This article is about a 25-minute color film, produced in Rhode Island by Rhode Islanders, that could be right out of the "Twilight Zone" television series.

The creative film begins with a one-minute computer graphic opening familiar to all Twilight Zone fans, but there the similarity ends, for this film has a wheelchair attempting to climb stairs and move through a doorway, an ear with a hearing aid flying through space, and more.

In the film, John Johnson, a job recruiter, thinks that handicapped people have their place, but it isn't the workplace. Fate however, will change his views. Johnson finds to his surprise, that the handicapped are working everywhere. He has entered the Rhode Island Zone, where handicapped people have taken over.

The film features several fictional Rhode Island businesses including the Blackstone Valley Landscape Crew, Washington County Gas Station, Pandora's Products, Cookie Place, and Chaves Horticultural Center.

This light-hearted look at prejudice and the capabilities of handicapped people carries a powerful message to Rhode Island employers: You can count on handicapped people. They can deliver.

The idea of using a "Twilight Zone" motif works well in getting this message across. John Johnson believes it is bizarre that people with disabilities could be working in jobs other than maintenance or assembly-line type work. In the end, of course, he comes to realize that there is nothing bizarre about hiring people with disabilities.

The film is the product of the combined creative efforts of David G. Payton, Executive Director of Kaleidoscope Theater, a locally based professional children's theater, who wrote and directed the film, and Sue Babin, Administrator in MHRH's Division of Retardation, the film's producer. With a public education grant to Kaleidoscope Theater from the Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council and additional support from Fleet National Bank, Payton and Babin worked two years on the cooperative venture.

According to Producer Babin, "The film is the first of its kind in Rhode Island and possibly the country. One of the unique features of this project is that people with disabilities have actively participated in various stages of development of 'The Rhode Island Zone,' from its inception to production, including acting, to publicity of Premiere Night. The film features Rhode Islanders who happen to have a disability and portrays them as "real people" too. For many, it was their first acting experience."

The film had a first showing at a Hollywood-style Premiere Night at a country club, complete with the "stars" arriving by limousine. The event was filmed by television stations, and received extensive media coverage.

Floral arrangements were furnished by businesses operated by people with disabilities, and refreshments were provided by firms that employ disabled people.

Entertainment was provided by Geri Jewell, a nationally acclaimed actress (NBC's "Facts of Life"), and comedienne who happens to have cerebral palsy. Within minutes, Geri had her audience of government and business leaders, and people associated with the film, roaring with laughter.

"Everyone is disabled," said Geri. "Some just show it more than others.

"Give the handicapped worker a chance," she said. "He may not succeed. He may not live up to your expectations. But give him a try . . . THEN you can fire him!"

Also on hand for Premiere Night was Dr. Jean Elder, Commissioner, Administration on Developmental Disabilities, of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dr. Elder stated that "The Rhode Island Zone" and Premiere Night activities were some of the most creative approaches by any state in the country in terms of innovative strategies for encouraging employers to hire people with disabilities.

The film has been shown on all local cable television stations, and to numerous organizations and business groups.

Departments and agencies of state government, local government groups and private and civic organizations, may make arrangements for their employees or members to view the film without charge by contacting: Susan Babin, Administrator, R.I. Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals (MHRH) Aime J. Forand Bldg., 600 New London Ave., Cranston, RI 02920, telephone 464-3234.

BE A FRIEND!

"There are times when a good friend can make all the difference."

This quotation is one of the primary tenets of the Blackstone Valley Chapter of the R.I. Association for Retarded Citizens, and a hallmark of its Friendship Program.

The Friendship Program evolved out of a belief that persons who are mentally retarded are first of all people, that every human being needs to express concern for another, and has the right to human dignity and self-determination.

The group is seeking volunteers who will be a friend to a mentally retarded person. Those enrolling in the Friendship Program will receive training from a community coordinator; receive support, cooperation and recognition; attend coordinating sessions for networking to enable the exchange of ideas, suggestions and information; and most important, receive assistance in finding a person with compatible interests and needs to spend time with.

As a friend of a person labeled mentally retarded, you will be expected to see your friend 1 to 4 hours each month and to keep in phone contact; to treat your friend with dignity and respect; to encourage your friend to help plan the activities you will be sharing (whenever possible); to maintain the relationship with your friend for as long as it is enjoyable for both parties involved, keeping in mind that there will be "ups" and "downs" as there are in all relationships; to give prior notice to your friend and to the community coordinator if the commitment is to be terminated or interrupted for an extended period of time; and to contact the community coordinator at least once a month to update.

Somewhere a friend is waiting to hear from you; needs you. Friends are not luxuries, they are necessities.

Call one of the following numbers today, and say, "I want to be a Friend!"

Blackstone Valley Chapter, RIARC

115 Manton St.

Pawtucket, R.I. 02861

Community Coordinator Linda Dvelis,

(401) 727-0150

727-0153

Northern Rhode Island — 769-9720

Southern Rhode Island — 884-6455

Westerly-Charlton — 596-2091

Only one health plan gives you and your family all these advantages:

- Medical help 24 hours a day
- No pre-existing condition exclusions
- Full coverage for full-time unmarried students to age 25
- Total health care under one roof
- All office visits covered in full

- Unlimited semi-private hospital coverage
- Dental coverage
- Appliance coverage
- Prescriptions only \$2.00 each
- Vision exam coverage
- Eyeglass/contact lens allowance

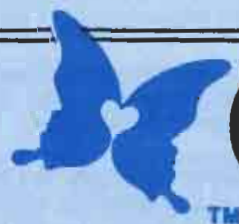
- No worries about paperwork or getting reimbursed

For benefit information, call
RIGHA Marketing, 421-4410

 **RIGHA**
The Experienced HMO

Health Care Centers in: Lincoln, Newport, Providence and Warwick, RI and
Plainville and Swansea, MA.

***“Health Care
For Everyone”
Call 737-6900***



Ocean State
Physicians Health Plan

MetroCenter, 475 Kilvert Street, Warwick, RI 02886